



Memorandum

TO: NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES AND
EDUCATION COMMITTEE

FROM: Albert Balagso

SUBJECT: COMMUNITY SPORTS FIELD
STUDY FINAL DRAFT

DATE: October 27, 2008

Approved

Date

COUNCIL DISTRICT: Citywide

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Neighborhood Services and Education Committee accept the Final Draft of the Community Sports Field Study.

OUTCOME

The outcome of this report is to provide a framework for the development of community sports fields that acknowledges the strong interest on behalf of the community for additional sport field amenities. This study was initiated in an effort to better understand the challenges and opportunities for sports field development, operations and maintenance within the City of San José.

BACKGROUND

In October, 2006, the City Council authorized an appropriation of \$165,000 for the completion of a community sports field study. Since that time, staff has been working with stakeholders to complete the study. On September 3, 2008, the Key Findings, Recommendations and Action Steps of the Community Sports Fields Study were presented to the Parks and Recreation Commission. On November 5, 2008, the Community Sports Fields Study was approved by the Parks and Recreation Commission.

ANALYSIS

Originally, it was envisioned that the study would be completed by an outside consultant. However at the request of stakeholders, it was determined that a community-driven approach would be more effective. Community members felt strongly that there was enough expertise and commitment from users to complete the project in a manner that would be more relevant for the City of San José. As such, it was agreed that specific tasks would be completed using outside consultants (surveys and other research), but that the preference of the community was to establish working subcommittees

comprised of City staff and community volunteers to conduct the study. This decision resulted in a longer than originally anticipated timeline, however, the end result has been a significant increase in the level of community awareness and cooperation for the final recommendations. The community has been very supportive of the process and a major by-product of this process has been the development of a much stronger relationship between the City and its customer user groups.

There are five key findings:

- 1) There is a shortage of sports fields to meet the diversity of needs;
- 2) Sports fields are not designed and maintained to support the current level of use;
- 3) Users are willing to make higher contributions to cover the cost of field maintenance in exchange for long-term negotiated use and the assurance that additional funds would be earmarked for field improvements;
- 4) There is a need for a strategic framework to shape program direction over the next twenty years. The strategies will be included in the updated 2008 Greenprint Strategic Plan, and aligned with the General Plan updates; and
- 5) Existing processes and systems (i.e., reservations, operations) are outdated, not customer friendly and in need of streamlining.

To address these findings, a variety of strategies and action steps are being recommended. These strategies have been categorized in the following five areas: 1) Partnerships; 2) Design and Maintenance; 3) Resources; 4) Development; and 5) Streamlining Opportunities.

It is important to note that many of the proposed strategies are already underway (i.e., negotiations with San José State and East Side Union School District for shared development of sports fields). As issues have been identified throughout the study process, staff has proceeded with opportunities to make process improvements and to pursue new opportunities as they have developed.

There are three key recommendations to highlight:

- 1) Focus on joint/shared development either through partnerships with school districts or organized users in an effort to reduce on-going maintenance costs. The majority of stakeholders recognize land and budget constraints and strongly advocate for partnerships to leverage limited resources;
- 2) Establish a tiered system of field types and new maintenance strategies in order to create a better correlation between field needs of individual users groups and the ability to recover costs required to maintain and operate fields for their intended purpose. A tiered system will be created to facilitate a diversity of fields and maintenance levels that, we believe, will result in an overall more efficient field maintenance program; and

3) Establish an Outdoor Sports Working Group to advise the Citywide Sports office. The level of community support throughout the study has been tremendous and extremely valuable. PRNS fully intends to maximize this support and is committed to an on-going dialog with community stakeholders to realize a truly exceptional community sports field program.

When more detailed plans are available for individual projects recommended by the Community Sports Fields Study, they shall be referred to the Planning, Building and Code Enforcement (PBCE) Department for further CEQA environmental review.

CONCLUSION

The Final Draft of the Community Sports Field Study provides a strategic framework to support future development and operations of the Citywide Sports Program. This report is the culmination of a nineteen month community visioning process that has included a wide range of community stakeholder groups and diverse input strategies.

Study participants recognize the challenges associated with land and budget constraints. For this reason, a great deal of emphasis has been placed on partnerships for new fields and opportunities to lower on-going costs through innovative programs.

Residents throughout the City have expressed their support for improved community sports fields and an ongoing willingness to work with the City to complete these goals.

FOLLOW-UP/NEXT STEPS

The final report is scheduled to be presented at the evening session of the City Council meeting on December 2, 2008.

PUBLIC OUTEACH

Extensive outreach has been conducted on this issue. There were 10 community meetings held, with one hosted in each council district. The website was updated regularly to reflect ongoing information and presentation material. A statistically significant survey was provided to over 600 residents in San José and mail-in survey responses were also submitted. There were five subcommittee groups comprised of community leaders that developed key issues and recommendations throughout the past year. On March 3, 2008, a large citywide community meeting was held to share key findings and gather final input for the study. The Parks and Recreation Commission heard the key findings, recommendations and action steps of the Community Sports Fields Study at their September 3, 2008 meeting, and approval of the Final Report on November 5, 2008.

COORDINATION

This memo has been coordinated with the City Attorney's Office, the Department of Planning, Building and Code Enforcement and the City Manager's Office.

COST IMPLICATIONS

There are no additional costs associated with this report. However, the ongoing operation and maintenance needs of sports fields will be included as part of the Operating and Capital Budget to provide essential services, including park maintenance, operations, and development.

CEQA

Not a project.

ALBERT BALAGSO
Director of Parks, Recreation
and Neighborhood Services

For additional information, please contact Deputy Director Cynthia Bojorquez at (408) 535-3581.